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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000250

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/14

TAGS: AMGT CE MV

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 023 (02/13/04)

Classified by POL Chief Joseph L. Novak for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

CONTENTS: CAMPAIGN UPDATE
- NOMINATION FOR POLITICAL LE TRAINING

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

¶1. (C) FYI. Just wanted to flag the following items regarding the Sri Lankan parliamentary election campaign:

-- Has Milinda Moragoda officially resigned (see Colombo 242)?: According to February 13 press reports, the President has sent a letter to the Prime Minister stating that Minister Moragoda's resignation letter is not/not valid, as it was addressed to the PM and not directly to the President. She reportedly stated that she would take action -- reassign Moragoda's economic reforms ministry portfolio to Finance Minister Choksy -- only after she received a resignation request directly from Moragoda.

-- Corruption Allegations: SLFP and JVP members have leveled corruption allegations against 14 ministers and 6 other UNP officials. Although the charges seem to be without a strong basis, they are an indication of how fast and furious and vituperative the effort to win votes is already becoming.

-- Tigers: According to contacts, Tiger political chief S.P. Thamilchelvam and his delegation are extending their European tour until February 18 from their original February 14 return date. Locally, the group has been basically quiet; earlier this week, however, Tiger eastern military leader "Colonel" Karuna was quoted as making some moderate themed comments about the situation in the south, indicating perhaps that the LTTE wants to underscore a willingness to show patience.

-- Polls: Just want to mention that this is not Iowa or New Hampshire and there are not a myriad of polls showing how the horse race is shaping up. In fact, we have not seen a poll yet. We'll tell you when we do. We have heard that the Center for Policy Alternatives is planning to do a poll which should be ready in mid-March. By the way, there were only two-three polls made public during the whole of the last parliamentary election campaign in late 2001. (POL)

NOMINATION FOR POLITICAL LE TRAINING

¶2. (U) The Desk will see a front-channel nominating Pol FSN Prasad Gajaweera for Political FSN training at FSI in September 2004. We would appreciate it if you would touch base with FSI on this soon. We would dearly like Prasad to be able to get the needed training. Thanks. (POL)

LUNSTEAD